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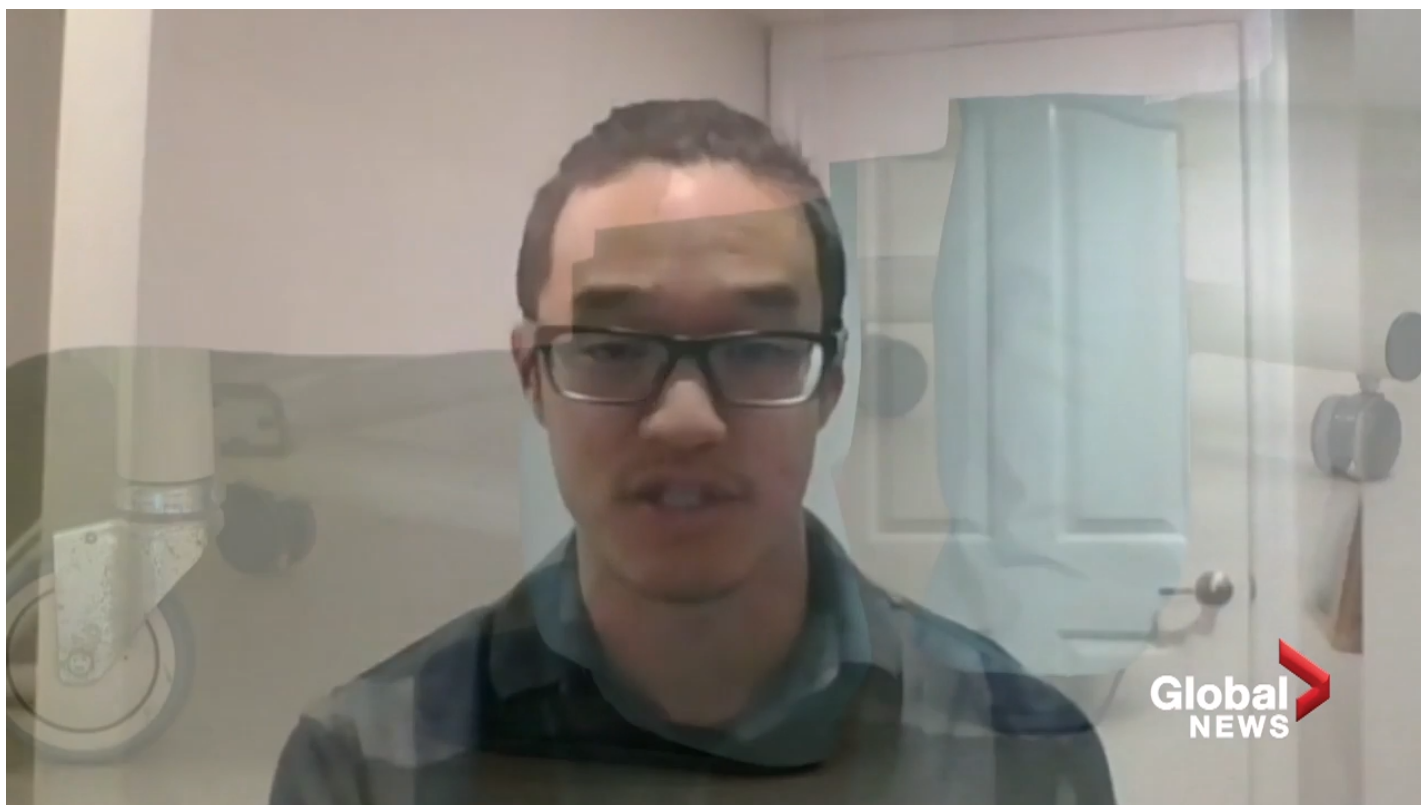
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HEALTH

'It could have been prevented so easily': disastrous ripple effects of lying about being COVID positive

By **Sarah Ryan** • Global News

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WATCH ABOVE: An Edmonton health-care worker is sharing his experience in dealing with the ripple effect of one person's decision to lie about their COVID-19 status – Nov 25, 2020



-A A+

An Edmonton occupational therapist and a number of his colleagues were forced into isolation after learning that a patient's caregiver lied about their COVID-19 status during the hospital's entry screening.

Justin Kiew [spoke out about the situation on Facebook](#), where it has been shared by 1,500 people. In his post, he talks about potentially having contracted COVID-19, while treating a patient whose caregiver tested positive for the virus.

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Kiew said he worked with the patient for more than 30 minutes on Monday, Nov. 16.

"It was not until Wednesday that we found out the patient's caregiver tested positive – and that was not forthcoming to us. None of us knew," he explained.

"This information was not disclosed during the screening questions at the hospital entrance or the unit. The caregiver also did not have the decency to continuously wear a mask."

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Kiew said the person had been coughing, but he did not question them at the time, believing they'd been truthful about their health. It turns out, they hadn't been.

“That puts me at risk, all my coworkers, along with the patient themselves, as well as the roommate that shared the room,” Kiew said.



Because he wasn't immediately aware of the caregiver's illness, Kiew went home and interacted with his family as normal for two days.

“I have interacted with my wife, my parents, my kids. I hug my kids all the time. That part scared me, right? Because my kids are immuno-compromised too, along with my parents.”

Kiew has three young children – the oldest is five, and two of them have underlying health issues.

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Then his mind shifted to all the other patients he'd seen before finding out he needed to isolate – and he feared he could have infected them, too.

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“If someone was honest about their symptoms, it could have been prevented so easily. We could have got proper PPE, brought the gowns in, brought the gloves in, it’s another layer of protection so we don’t spread it to someone else.”

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Alberta’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, addressed the problem on Friday, saying Alberta Health Services experienced several cases of people intentionally hiding their COVID-19 status in health-care settings.

“While the vast majority of Albertans understand that doing this puts loved ones and the teams caring for their loved ones at even greater risk of illness, the few who choose to do this are impacting us all,” she explained.

“If a provider or other member of a health-care team get sick, it means they are not available to treat patients for at least two weeks, which translates to a lack of staff to care for all patients.”



Then, Hinshaw took it one step further — talking about potential consequences if people continue to lie.

“Ultimately, if this behaviour continues, Alberta Health Service will have to consider limiting designated family and support and visitation even further.”

Kiew is on day 10 of his isolation, stuck in his basement as his kids call for him upstairs.

“My daughter just turned five on (Nov.) 23, and I just sat down here, listening to what’s going on up there through Facetime. I can’t give her a birthday hug,” he said.

“They want to see me, they want me to read them a bedtime story, or be there with them in the night-time and I can’t. I can’t.”



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When asked about his thoughts on repercussions for people caught lying about their health, Kiew said it’s complicated.

“At first I was angry. I was like, ‘They should be fined, they should be punished.’ But I’m not sure what the right answer is, really. The question is,

‘Why are they lying?’ Are they fearful they won’t be able to come in and be with their loved ones?”

AHS does have a process for exemptions if a COVID-19 positive person wants to go to a hospital or continuing care facility with a patient, though it notes it is used extremely rarely.

It would be used for someone supporting a minor, an obstetrical patient, or an adult-dependent with disabilities, and must be granted before they arrive on site.

The person would be required to wear additional personal protective equipment, as well.

Kiew said he hopes people think twice about the damaging ripple effects their decision could have before inaccurately answering screening questions.

“Just be honest.”

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